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ABSTRACT

This paper traces the development of the functionalist position chronologically through its major permutations, from the defining contributions of Emile Durkheim, Bronislaw Malinowski, and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown in its anthropological phase through its development in American sociology by Talcott Parsons and Robert K. Merton to its explicit formulation in communication studies by Charles R. Wright. Although necessarily cursory, this historical review highlights significant philosophical and conceptual differences within the tradition that have been effaced from recent discussions in the communication context, including an initial theoretical coupling of culture and praxis, as located by Durkheim in the collective moral code, as well as an aborted culturalist orientation in the works of Malinowski. A concluding section identifies the distinguishing characteristics of the tradition and points to the emergence of functionalist assumptions in cultural studies and cultural indicators research as the possible harbinger of a new cultural functionalism that synthesizes the strengths of various earlier functionalisms while addressing major weaknesses of the tradition, notably problems of logic (i. e., tautology and an inappropriate appeal to teleological explanations), political conservatism, and a tendency to impose psychological and sociological analyses upon specifically cultural materials. (Contains 83 references.) (Author)

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The Functionalist Tradition and Communication Theory

by
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Running head: THE FUNCTIONALIST TRADITION

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KEY WORDS: Functionalism, cultural indicators research, cultural studies, Emile Durkheim, Bronislaw Malinowski, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Talcott Parsons, Robert K. Merton, Charles R. Wright

The Functionalist Tradition and Communications

Functionalism may be considered "an actors' category, meaningful in the sense that people affiliated with the name" (Platt, 1986, p. 507; also Sztompka, 1986) as well as a philosophical position that emphasizes the consequences (functions) of the phenomena under study for the social system. This notion of systemness implies the existence of boundaries to delineate the unit under analysis from its environment. Unlike scholars who focus upon episodic events, functionalists study patterns, rituals and routines along with their consequences for society and its members. At the heart of this approach is a concern "with the way in which people behave, or misbehave, following, making or breaking cultural rules" (Kuper, 1985, p. 528; also Parsons, 1977; Wright, 1989a). Beyond these points of agreement lie fundamental philosophical and other differences that are reflected in the variety of labels applied to this tradition — from "functionalism" (implying theoretical coherence) through "functional-structuralism" (implying coherence of the system being analyzed) to "functional analysis" (suggesting a general philosophical stance) [1].

The importance of functionalism to mass communications, while often asserted, remains difficult to gauge, given the relatively scant attention paid to theoretical issues in historical treatments of the field. This neglect of theory has been traced to the fragmentation of interests in the field (Merton, 1957, p. 443), the desertion of seminal early theorists (Berelson, 1959), an obsession with methods (Nordenstreng, 1968, p. 208) and the pragmatic and

practical beginnings of the discipline (Golding & Murdock, 1980, p. 60). Further obscuring functionalism's place in the field has been the tendency for discussions to remain framed by relatively narrow disciplinary, geographic and temporal boundaries. Excluded from consideration, consequently, has been the European "prehistory" of the tradition along with its specifically anthropological roots. The relative lack of attention to functionalism in particular may be traced to the radical realignment of mass communication theorizing during the 1980s which drained interest away from functionalism and other elements of the ancien regime just as historical treatments of the field were increasing and becoming more explicit. This limitation, while defensible in individual works as a useful, even necessary strategy for imposing order and conveying significance, is less justifiable when reproduced at the level of the discipline or field, especially if it is not linked inherently to some aspect of the theory.

In the small but growing literature on the history of communication theory, treatment of functionalism remains sketchy, generally appearing as one element in broad discussions of theoretical or disciplinary history (e. g., Delia, 1987; Gitlin, 1981; Golding and Murdock, 1980; Hall, 1982; Hardt, 1979; Kline, 1972; McQuail, 1969; Rogers, 1983). Among the few articles and scholars that have taken functionalism as their exclusive focus (Klapper, 1963; Rothenbuhler, 1986; Wright, 1964; Wright, 1974; Wright, 1989a), one interpretation has dominated, that of Charles R. Wright. In arguing for a consideration of Parsonian neofunctionalism by communication theorists, however, Rothenbuhler (1987) did not examine alternatives, thus his plea

came ultimately to rest on its availability, not on a greater elegance than others nor its neater fit with the concerns of communications researchers.

Within the existing literature, the level of influence attributed to functionalism varies directly with the degree of homogeneity attributed to the field by various scholars as well as the theoretical allegiances of the beholder. Holist and structuralist critics of "conventional research" tend to direct their attack at the elementarist impulses of positivist, behavioralist effects research, thus effacing the functionalist components of communication theory (e. g., Blumler, 1985; Gitlin, 1981; Halloran, 1981; Hardt, 1988; Kim, 1988) while non-structuralists present functionalism as one of several competing influences on the early discipline (e. g., Carey and Kreiling, 1974; Delia, 1987; Hardt, 1988). In contrast, the approach is credited as a constituent element of communications by those scholars in the 1960s who saw themselves working toward the creation of a unified discipline (Klapper, 1963; Wright, 1964) and later by those who viewed the field as divisible into at most two parts, a dominant and a challenging paradigm (Golding & Murdock, 1980; Kim, 1988; Rogers, 1983). If not the reigning paradigm, functionalism clearly held sway over a considerable portion of the intellectual terrain by the 1960s (Elliott, 1974; Golding & Murdock, 1980; Kline, 1972; Rothenbuhler, 1987; Wright, 1974). It pervaded the vocabulary, if not the analyses, of many early communication scholars including Klapper, Lasswell, Merton, Schramm, and Wright.

The European "pre-history"

Although largely ignored in the communications context, the contributions of Durkheim, Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown continue to ramify through functionalist thought in particular and social science theorizing in general. Their interest in the patterned basis of social life, for example, advanced the study of culture beyond earlier diffusionary and evolutionary concerns while laying the basis for our current understanding of individual cultures as structured entities composed of interlocking components. Durkheim in particular helped to fuse the Grand Theory Tradition of nineteenth-century thought with the emerging spirit of empiricism and contributed the use of "function" as an analytical concept. To explain any social phenomenon, he recommended, it is necessary to identify the cause which produced it along with the function which it fulfills — beginning always with the former. "It is from the cause that the effect draws its energy; but it also restores it to the cause on occasion, and consequently it cannot disappear without the cause showing the effects of its disappearance. For example, the social reaction that we call 'punishment' is due to the intensity of the collective sentiments which the crime offends; but, from another angle, it has the useful *function* of maintaining these sentiments at the same degree of intensity, for they would soon diminish if offenses against them were not punished" (Durkheim, 1982, p. 124).

The "function" proposed here by Durkheim was not the maintenance of a grand system with which functionalism has come to be associated. At

most, he seemed to suggest a connection between apparently disparate elements of a culture that would lead them to vary together: in short, an integration of the cultural system. If Durkheim's social organism is taken to mean the whole cultural complex or cluster of patterned behavior and symbol manipulation, then what is proposed is nothing more than a "correspondence" between norms (i. e., systems of morality and justice) and socially sanctioned systems for enforcement (i. e., punishment). In addition, he suggests in his crime example the existence of an underlying unity between apparent opposites.

For Durkheim, knowledge of society could only be derived from the study of "social facts" or "culture" and not from the study of individuals.

> Undoubtedly no collective entity can be produced if there are no individual consciousnesses: this is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. In addition, these consciousnesses must be associated and combined in a certain way. It is from this combination that social life arises and consequently it is this combination which explains it. By aggregating together, by interpenetrating, by fusing together, individuals give birth to a being psychical if you will, but one which constitutes a psychical individuality of a new kind. Thus it is in the nature of that individuality and not in that of its component elements that we must search for the proximate and determining causes of the facts produced in it (Durkheim, 1982, p. 129).

Implicit in this passage is the sharp demarcation evident throughout Durkheim's methodological writings between society and sociological explanations on the one hand and the individual realm and psychology on

the other (Lukes, 1982; Bohannan & Glazer, 1973). Durkheim considered both utility and intentionality as irrelevant in the identification of functions in particular and sociological explanations in general. "We use the word 'function,' in preference to 'end' or 'goal,' precisely because social phenomena generally do not exist for the usefulness of the results they produce. We must determine whether there is a correspondence between the fact being considered and the general needs of the social organism, and in what this correspondence consists, without seeking to know whether it was intentional or not. All these questions of intention are, moreover, too subjective to be dealt with scientifically" (1982, p. 123). As noted by Lukes (1982, p. 15), this reification of "society" from the "individual" deprived Durkheimian functionalism of a micro-theory to ground its macro-explanations.

Where functionalist implications laid scattered throughout Durkheim's works, it would fall to Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown to make these explicit and coherent. Both opposed the evolutionary and diffusionist trend then dominant in anthropology which presented culture as a patch-work of disparate traits assembled accidentally and randomly. In Durkheim's model of society they found an alternative that viewed culture as synchronic and integrated. Of the two, Radcliffe-Brown would enrich functionalism more at the level of theory, Malinowski more methodologically. In the process, however, the two would tug functionalism into two disparate directions — Malinowski toward a psychologistic, biological-needs driven functionalism and Radcliffe-Brown toward what has been variously called "structural positivism," comparative sociology or sociological anthropology.

Radcliffe-Brown eventually would reject the "functionalism" label, partly because of its doctrinaire connotation but also in order to emphasize his difference with Malinowski (Radcliffe-Brown, 1966, pp. 178-187; Malinowski, 1977, pp. 36-42; Malinowski, 1945, pp. 14-26; Kuper, 1977, pp. 49-52; also Goody, 1973; Kuper, 1977; Swingewood, 1984).

Radcliffe-Brown is said to have discovered Durkheim's works sometime between 1908 and 1922, drawn in part by a shared interest in the social life of the Australian aborigines. From these he drew three concepts which he sought to integrate: function, process and structure. In a paper first published in 1935, Radcliffe-Brown defined the function of any repetitive activity as "the part it plays in the *social life as a whole* and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of the structural continuity" or "the contribution which a partial activity makes to the total activity of which it is a part." For Radcliffe-Brown, a process — the basis for defining functions — was a unit of recurrent and synchronic social activity. But where Durkheim had defined a function as the correspondence between a social institution and the needs of the social organism, Radcliffe-Brown sought to substitute "necessary conditions of existence" for "needs," in order to minimize the teleological interpretations against which Durkheim had warned (Radcliffe-Brown, 1968, pp. 179, 180-181; emphasis added; also Goody, 1973).

Radcliffe-Brown sought further to push functionalism beyond a concern with social phenomena in general to a more limited focus on social *structure*, the orderly arrangement within an organism of its essential, constituent parts. In his 1940 presidential address to the Royal

Anthropological Institute, he noted: "Science (as distinguished from history or biography) is not concerned with the particular, the unique, but only with the general, with kinds, with events which recur. The actual relations of Tom, Dick and Harry or the behaviour of Jack and Jill may go down in our field note-books and may provide illustrations for a general description. But what we need for scientific purposes is an account of the form of the structure" (Radcliffe-Brown, 1968, p. 192; also p. 180). Radcliffe-Brown's major work, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (1952), reflects a functionalism that was every bit as sociologistic as Durkheim's, but slightly more positivist and structuralist.

The same certainly could not be said of Malinowski, the consummate ethnographer, who left relatively few theoretical works (e. g., Malinowski, 1939, 1945). Where Radcliffe-Brown and Durkheim had merely employed biological analogies in explaining the functionalist approach, Malinowski defined functions as being rooted in seven biological needs of nutrition, reproduction, bodily comforts, safety, relaxation, movement, and growth. In his view, every institution and every cultural item served one or more of these needs:

> the cultural satisfaction of primary biological needs imposes upon man secondary or delivered imperatives. . . . The functional approach to the comparative study of cultures thus postulates that the study of systems of production, distribution and consumption must be carried out, even in the most primitive societies (Malinowski, 1945, p. 44).

And where Durkheim saw specialization and collective awareness as the roots of social solidarity, Malinowski pointed instead to biological imperatives:

> Function means, therefore, always the satisfaction of a need from the simplest act of eating to the sacramental performance in which the taking of the communion is related to a whole system of beliefs determined by a cultural necessity to be at one with the living God. (Malinowski, 1977, p. 159; also Malinowski, 1939)

A more important departure from Durkheim was Malinowski's insistence on using sociological *and* psychological data to support functionalist claims. He explored Freudian psychology earlier than most other social scientists, but quickly rejected its assumptions as narrowly culture-bound. Instead, he operated on the basis of a theory of learning that failed "to consider the problems of the organization of human personality as a motivational system. . . . (He) failed to establish a theoretically adequate link between the observed facts of cultural behavior and the psychological sources of motivation to such behavior. He reduced the connection to an instrumental one, leaving the structure of the motivation system essentially untouched as a system of given" (Parsons, 1977, p. 96). Where Durkheim had avoided subjectivity, Malinowski came to be mired in it, given his conception of motivation as utilitarian and individualistic.

For Malinowski, it was axiomatic that "in field work and theory, in observation and analysis, the leitmotif 'individual, group, and their mutual

dependence' will run through all the inquiries." He argued that what distinguished functionalism from other sociological theories was its attention to both "the emotional as well as the intellectual side of mental processes." Turning Durkheim's emphasis of *social* holism on its head, Malinowski would insist that "functionalism is, in its essence, the theory of transformation of organic — that is, *individual* — needs into derived cultural necessities and imperatives. . . . The individual, with his physiological needs and psychological processes, is the ultimate source and aim of all tradition, activities, and organized behavior." The result of these incremental but significant shifts was a utilitarian, biological and psychologistic functionalism that placed the individual as prior to the social system, in sharp contrast to Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown. In what seemed to be a recognition of the differences in their approaches, Malinowski characterized Radcliffe-Brown's work as "still developing and deepening the views of the French sociological school" (Malinowski, 1939, pp. 962, 939; Parsons, 1977, pp. 107-108, n. 21, emphasis added).

During this period, positivism was so pronounced among functionalists that their approach came to be used, in anthropology at least, as synonymous with the "scientific" study of culture and society. Nearly all interest in non-temporal, structural aspects of social inquiry was considered functionalism, in contrast to historical studies on the one hand and an earlier evolutionism on the other (White, 1987; Malinowski, 1945, pp. 27-40; Radcliffe-Brown, 1968, pp. 1-14). Conflating evolutionism with historicism,

Radcliffe-Brown in 1929 saw only "two different and opposing tendencies" in the study of culture.:

> One view, by far the most popular, regards culture purely from the historical point of view and attempts, in the absence of any historical records, to multiply and elaborate hypothetical reconstructions of an unknown past. . . . The other tendency, best represented in England by Malinowski, is to treat each culture as a functionally interrelated system and to endeavour to discover the general laws of function for human society as a whole (quoted in Goody, 1973, p. 187).

This positivist emphasis, understandable given Malinowski's early training in physics and Radcliffe-Brown's in physical science, economics and philosophy, would be moderated only with the incorporation of functionalism into the United States. With this de-emphasis of positivism, functionalism would shift from being widely regarded as a theory (e. g., Radcliffe-Brown, 1968, pp. 117-132) or set of theories (e. g., Malinowski, 1977; Malinowski, 1945, pp. 41-51), in the sense of having a coherent set of assumptions wedded to a specific method, to being considered instead as a "conceptual scheme" (e. g., Parsons, 1977) or a research "approach" (e. g., Merton, 1957, pp. 20) or a mere "slogan" (e. g., Goody, 1973).

Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton and the Americanization of Functionalism

The first functionalist sociological studies in the United States conducted during the 1920s and the 1930s — "Middletown" by Robert and

Helen Lynd and "Yankee City" and "Jonesville" by W. Lloyd Warner — were influenced more by Radcliffe-Brown than by Malinowski. But it was Malinowski's approach to functionalism that would triumph on the American social science landscape, thanks to Harvard political scientist Talcott Parsons. In explaining the displacement of the Lynds-Warner approach by Parsonian functionalism, Grimes (1988) cited the fit between Parson's integrative framework and the American social vision as well as the increased receptivity of social scientists during that period to sociological theorizing which contested the hegemony of the University of Chicago school of sociology. Certainly a contributing factor was the immense productivity of Parsons who was not only personally prolific, but, like Durkheim, nurtured an important group of students at Harvard that included Kinsley Davis, Clifford Geetz, Leon Mayhew and Merton (Merton, 1957, p. x; Parsons, 1977, p. 41).

While at the London School of Economics during the early 1920s, Parsons studied with Malinowski who introduced him to the work of Durkheim and "who proved the most important to me intellectually." Upon returning to the United States, Parsons found himself out of step with the general trend of utilitarianism, behaviorism and empiricism, "namely the idea that scientific knowledge was a total reflection of the 'reality out there,' and even selection was alleged to be illegitimate" (Parsons, 1977, pp. 23, 27). For the first twenty years of his intellectual life, Parsons was primarily an "importer and interpret of European social thought," including a translation of Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic* (Mayhew, 1985, p. 3). In synthesizing

formerly disparate traditions, Parsons created a transcendental alternative which, in the context of the Cold War, came to be positioned as an American rival to Marxism — and a mirror image of its structuralist, grand theory rival. He would help precipitate a major shift in American sociology, from the individualist social psychological approach that dominated before World War Two to a holistic, anti-psychological approach in the post-war era (Swingewood, 1984).

In its most mature form, Parsons' theory was built around "four functional problems confronted by all systems" — *adaptation*, or securing generalized resources for use in achieving the varied output goals of the system; *goal attainment*, or providing for the effective expenditure of resources in the pursuit of particular goals; *integration*, or providing for the coordination of the diverse elements and units within the system; and *latent pattern maintenance*, or maintaining the stability of the overall structural reference points and boundaries that define the system. These functions (which are often referred to by their abbreviations A, G, I, and L) can be ordered according to the hierarchy of control, with pattern maintenance the controlling function at the top and adaptation the ultimate conditional element at the bottom (Mayhew, 1985, p. 24). Parsons regarded "functions" as mechanisms that "adjust the state of the system relative to changes in its environment" (Parsons, 1977, p. 101). This emphasis upon exogenous sources of change opened him to charges of conservatism and stasis.

Also central to his schema was the notion of differentiation which is said to exist when a system has "specialized, systematic organized means for

coping with its functional imperatives" (Mayhew, 1985, p. 30). "A fully differentiated social system exhibits six sets of exchanges (L-A, L-G, L-I, I-A, I-G, G-A), each of which is accomplished through a double interchange comparable to the market for labor and goods, production and consumption (Mayhew, 1985, p. 32). Parsons regarded the articulation of multiple systems, especially social and individual ones, to be "the most prolific single source of difficulty and confusion in theoretical analysis." Drawing upon a close reading of Freud and formal study of psychoanalysis, he proposed to overcome this problem by recognizing the individual as a subsystem of the society that embodies the larger system through internalization (Parsons, 1977, p. 108).

Even before Parsons' *The Social System* was published, Davis had ignited a raging debate among social science theorists with the publication of his *Human Society* (1949), which featured two functionalist assumptions: the integration of institutions at the macro-sociological level and the contribution of the parts to the survival of the whole. In a 1959 paper, "The myth of functional analysis as a special method in sociology and anthropology," Davis went on to claim that functionalism was *the* approach employed by *all* social scientists, whether or not they called themselves functionalists. Despite the centrality of Parsons and Davis to wide-ranging debates in the social sciences in the 1940s and 1950s, neither would have a direct, lasting impact on the development of functionalist theorizing within communication studies (Rothenbuhler, 1987). In that particular context, the

contributions of Merton would be far and away more important, especially his *Social Theory and Social Structure* (1957).

From its inception Mertonian functionalism developed as a critical reaction to its Parsonian progenitor. In the introduction to *Social Theory and Social Structure,* Merton explained sociological theory as "logically interconnected conceptions which are limited and modest in scope, rather than all-embracing and grandiose. Throughout I attempt to focus attention on what might be called theories of the middle range; theories intermediate to the minor workings hypotheses evolved in abundance during the day-by-day routines of research, and the all-inclusive speculations comprising a master conceptual scheme from which it is hoped to derive a very large number of empirically observed uniformities of social behavior" (Merton, 1957, pp. 5-6).

Merton made four distinctive modifications to functionalist "postulates." He argued that not all cultural items fulfill functions; that diverse items may fulfill the same function; that some items, which he labeled "dysfunctional," may contribute adversely to the adjustment and adaptation of the system; and that the focus of empirical studies should be on the net balance of functional consequences. Those arguments went against the grain of accepted functionalist wisdom that all functions were positive, that all systems enjoyed a functional unity and that the removal of certain constituent elements — regarded as indispensable — would fundamentally alter the workings of each system. The cumulative result of these changes was a more dynamic ideographic functionalism (Merton, 1957, pp. 30-37; also Rose, 1960; Sztompka, 1986; Swingewood, 1984).

Merton's preference for in-depth interviewing and other introspective methods as well as his previous involvement in historical research and empirical data-collection encouraged a greater sensitivity and respect for individual agency that was then current among functionalists, leading to his most problematic contribution: the distinction which he introduced between manifest and latent functions. "Manifest functions are those objective consequences contributing to the adjustment or adaptation of the system which are intended and recognized by participants in the system; Latent functions, correlatively, being those which are neither intended nor recognized" (Merton, 1957, pp. 19-84, especially p. 51)[2]. This accommodation of individual motivation and cognition into functionalism, not surprisingly, followed the application of functionalist assumptions for the first time to societies in which the scholars coexisted with their subjects and their intended audiences. "Latent" analysis — more readily accepted when the subject-matter was foreign to readers —invited contestation when applied to known subjects. This emergence of "the subject" from the shadows of functional analysis coincided with two broad intellectual trends in the United States toward the recognition of perspectival differences: the acceptance of cultural relativism as well as an attempt to fuse psychological concerns and lessons with sociology into a grand unified science.

Defining Characteristics of the Tradition and Differences Within

Criticisms of functionalism during the 1970s effaced differences within the tradition due to a lack of careful delineation among the positions of individual functionalists on specific epistemological and methodological issues, as well as a failure to undertake contextual analysis of key constructs in the works of individuals scholars. Of the many polar assumptions made by social scientists concerning the nature of social systems, the only commonly accepted element among functionalists is a holist ontology[3]. Concerning the derivation of knowledge, all of the functionalists reviewed here were thoroughly empiricist, holding systematic observation and sensory experience to be the main source of scientific knowledge. Even Parsons, who came to be widely perceived as anti-empiricist because of his opposition to cruder strains of empiricism and his lack of engagement in empirical study, "consistently held science to consist of an interplay between theoretical analysis and observation" (Camic, 1987; e. g., Parsons, 1982, pp. 65-75).

In epistemology, functionalism is explicitly realist, since the functions, systems and other elements identified in these analyses are not available to direct observation. Indeed, Durkheim's functionalism grew directly out of a critique of Comte's positivism[4]. Only Radcliffe-Brown is said to have held a consistent but naive positivism, regarding the social networks he observed as corresponding to empirical reality (Kuper, 1977, p. 4; cf. Camic, 1987; Lukes, 1982; Platt, 1986; Parsons, 1982, pp. 76-92; Swingewood, 1984). Nonetheless, the approach has come to embody a dualist epistemology, arguing on the one

hand that functional integration constitutes the social equivalent of a natural law while recognizing that the basis and patterns of integration differ from one society to another.

Functionalists tend to oscillate around two slightly different conceptualizations of human nature, specifically the degree of emphasis given to individual cognition and intentionality. Durkheim had explicitly excluded concerns with purposes, in order to close the door on utilitarian interpretations. The result was a deterministic perspective on explaining historical causality — emphasizing the primacy of social structure over individual autonomy and free will as well as an analyst-centered functionalism, disallowing independent verification of findings, especially where the field notes and other supporting data had been collected by the person interpreting them (as was generally the case in earlier anthropological practice). This strain would prove particularly compatible with the nomothetic concerns of Radcliffe-Brown and Parsons. Unlike Radcliffe-Brown, Parsons drew upon Freud to develop a voluntaristic conception of human action.

> Neither the knowledge of the relation of means and end on which action is based nor the application of that knowledge comes automatically. Both are the result of effort, of the exercise of will. Hence the probability that concrete action will only imperfectly realize such norms. Ignorance, error, and obstacles to the realization of ends which transcend human powers will all play a part in determining the concrete course of events."
> (Parsons, 1982, pp. 79-80)

Although Parsonian functionalism was more voluntaristic than his European precursors, his work as a whole carried a deterministic cast, brought about by his uphill swim against the utilitarian individualist tide in American social science. In contrast, Merton — through his formulation of "manifest" functions — advanced the perception of participants as an alternative basis for measuring consequences. This insight would be abstracted from the rest of Merton's approach and built upon by scholars seeking an alternative to what was commonly viewed as Parsonian overstructuration. However, in isolating the explanations provided by subjects of their cultural practices and social actions from norms — the grammar of social and cultural praxis, these scholars would dichotomize two domains which are inseparably linked in the construction of cultural meaning: the latent normative order and the manifest world of intentions.

On methodological orientation, functionalists also divide along ideographic and nomothetic orientations, the principle difference being as explained by Radcliffe-Brown:

> In an idiographic enquiry the purpose is to establish as acceptable certain particular or factual propositions or statements. A nomothetic enquiry, on the contrary, has for its purpose to arrive at acceptable general propositions. (Radcliffe-Brown, 1968, pp. 1-3; also Hempel, 1959)

Of the five functionalists considered here, Durkheim and Parson were most nomothetic, the latter having "never published a paper reporting directly on data derived from a specific empirical investigation" (Devereau, 1961, p. 1;

also Lukes, 1982). Although both Radcliffe-Brown and Merton made mainly idiographic contributions, Merton has come to enjoy a greater stature as a theorist because of the wider influence of his *Social Theory and Social Structure* as well as the primacy of his discipline (sociology) over Radcliffe-Brown's (anthropology) in the hierarchy of social science theory. Despite Malinowski's rejection (1977, pp. 7-8) of any distinction between nomothetic and ideographic disciplines as "hackneyed" and "a philosophic red herring," his orientation was most ideographic, his only nomothetic work (Malinowski, 1945) being written toward the end of his life and published posthumously.

Not surprisingly, these broad philosophical differences registered at the level of conceptualization, with a common vocabulary often obscuring important differences in the specific meaning employed by each functionalist in reference to "function," the source of functions, mechanisms for the articulation of consequences, the degree of systemness, and outcome of functions. Concerning the key concept of "function" itself, for example, Merton (1957, pp. 20-21) noted four usages drawn from various academic disciplines: "occupation," from Weberian sociology; "activities assigned to the incumbent of a social status," from political science; a variable considered in relation to one or more other variables," from mathematics; and "vital or organic processes considered in the respects in which they contribute to the maintenance of the organism," from sociology and social anthropology[5].

In probing differences in the use of "function," however, Merton confined his attention to the level of semantics, leaving the logical value of

the concept unexamined. His definition of functions (1957, p. 51) as "those observed consequences which make for the adaptation or adjustment of a given system" deviated from Durkheim's — as Malinowski had before him — mainly in recognizing individual actions as possible sources of functions. As had been the case with Radcliffe-Brown (1968, p. 181) who defined a function as "the contribution which a partial activity makes to the total activity of which it is a part" and Malinowski (1977, p. 39; cf. p. 83) for whom it was "the satisfaction of a need by an activity in which human beings cooperate, use artifacts and consume goods," Merton failed to identify a mechanism through which "adaptations or adjustments" would regulate the social system. Parsons alone tried to accommodate a means for the self-regulation of systems into his definition of functions which he called "mechanisms that adjust the state of the system relative to changes in its environment." But, he did so by sacrificing endogenous change and by developing a set of primary functions that were transhistorical and transsystemic (i. e., integration, adaptation, goal attainment and pattern maintenance). Several logical problems attributed to functionalism, mainly a tendency toward tautology and excessive use of teleological explanations, may be traced to the imprecise definitions of functions. This failure to clearly conceptualize functions is ironic, given the centrality of the concept to the entire functionalist enterprise.

Although functionalists are often accused of failing to account for endogenous change, only Parsons among the leading theorists held the source of functions to be "the environment." All others saw functions as

originating in collective action by subjects without the system, with Malinowski and Merton attributing change to individual actors as well. By focusing narrowly upon "function" while ignoring closely related terms, Merton — and the many who have followed him in this regard (Firth, 1957; Jarvie, 1965; and Martindale, 1965) missed certain theoretical implications of the term which only become evident when the works of individual theorists are considered holistically. Conversely, by drawing broadly beyond the explicitly functionalist literature, Merton obscured important differences among functionalists.

On the conceptualization of the "system," important differences also separate systemic or structural functionalist like Durkheim, Radcliffe-Brown and Parsons, for whom all elements contribute to maintaining the whole, from general or empirical functionalists like Malinowski, Klapper and Merton, concerned with specific empirically determined functions (Flanigan & Fogelman, 1965; Klapper, 1963; Parsons, 1977; Swingewood, 1984). Malinowski made this difference explicit when he noted (1977, p. 159), in reference to Radcliffe-Brown: "Functionalism would not be so functional after all unless it could define the concept of function not merely by such glib expressions as 'the contribution which a partial activity makes to the total activity of which it is a part,' but by a much more definite and concrete reference to what actually occurs and what can be observed." Of the two conceptualizations, the "empirical" or "general" has proven "eminently useful both in depicting behavior as it relates to a specific society and in some

measure to predicting it" (Spencer, 1965, p. 9; also Carey and Kreiling, 1974; Rose, 1960).

Concerning the outcomes of functions, three are commonly cited: adaptation, integration, and equilibrium or stasis. While often used interchangeably, they imply varying degrees of stability and conservativism, from Merton's "adaptation" being the least and stasis the most. In contrasting stasis to integration, Spencer (1965, pp. 3-4) noted:

> If one were to return to the history of functionalist ideas, it is this problem (stasis) which gives rise to the fullest discussion. . . At this point it may suffice to suggest that there is a contrast between such a search for major and integrative leitmotifs in a socio-cultural system and one which deals with interrelationships between facets. In the latter instance the whole is implicit, and the concern is not so much with the model of the whole as it is with the chain reaction which arises from the interplay between institution and elements of culture.

In short, functionalists have shown a consistent tendency to bifurcate over three philosophical issues: the degree of systemness, outcome of functions and the level of synchronicity assumed to characterize social processes (Chart 1). These divergences may be explained by two factors. First, Durkheim's analytic framework was flexible enough to permit development in two directions: One explored connections among social institutions (and connections between those connections) and the other between the individual and the group through the internalization of communal values. For the first of these, Parsons used the word "structure" while reserving "functions" for mechanisms linking systems to changes in their

environments (Parsons, 1977, p. 103). Although these options are logically complementary scholars have tended to pursue each exclusively or sequentially. Durkheim, for example, did not develop the second of these. Radcliffe-Brown, as noted by Kuper (1977, p. 3), moved from an early concentration upon the maintenance of socially requisite 'sentiments' in individuals toward a focus on linkages between institutions." Secondly, divergences over systemness, the outcome of functions and degrees of synchronicity tend to co-vary with the self-conscious methodological orientations of various functionalists, with nomothetic scholars tending to emphasize wider social systems and to assume greater degrees of unity and stasis. In addition, there developed a generational-cum-geographic divide on the conceptualization of human nature. Although an assumption of determinism has served to distinguish Durkheimian sociology from rival claimants and functionalism from alternative social science approaches, this emphasis came to be moderated with the transference of functionalism to America, where a legacy of liberal individualism provided a more fertile ground for voluntaristic theories than Europe (Ross, 1991). Reinforcing this propensity of American functionalism toward voluntarism was the intervening rise of Freudian psychology which provided the wherewithal for accommodating individual purposes and cognition to social processes.

At the point of functionalism's incorporation into communications, two strains existed: one nomothetic, systemic, stasis and structuralist and another generalist, dynamic, actionist, emphasizing individual agency, cognition and intentionality. That Merton's *Social Theory and Social*

Structure transcended the existing functionalist tradition was immediately recognized by contemporaries who underscored the difference by labeling Merton's contribution as a "new theory" or "neofunctionalism" (Parsons, 1977, pp. 108-111; Hilbert, 1989; Rose, 1960; Sztompka, 1986). A failure to distinguish among these has led some scholars to propose throwing the Mertonian baby out with its Parsonian bath water.

Mertonian Functionalism and Communication Studies

Although McQuail (1969, p. 84) notes correctly that no one communication researcher has been outstandingly associated with the *application* of functional analysis, one individual — Charles R. Wright — disproportionally influenced the explicit formulation of functionalism in communication (Carey & Kreiling, 1974). His first contribution (1964) identified four levels of mass communication appropriate for the application of functionalist analyses: all mass communication processes within a given society taken together; each medium of mass communication taken as an item; each media organization or institution; and each consequence unique to mass mediated communication. He dismissed the first as "holding little immediate promise for the development of an empirically verifiable theory of mass communication" because it was dependent on "speculation" and relied upon incommensurate data drawn from different societies (p. 95). Based on an assumption that phenomena at the fourth level was relatively more concrete and measurable, Wright viewed that level as more promising.

He cited "surveillance" and "transmission of the social heritage" as examples of fourth level phenomena, though these are neither more concrete than specific media organization nor *unique* to mass communication.

In urging the application of functionalism to various levels of human systems (i. e., individuals, subgroups, social and cultural systems (p. 94), Wright was revealing his theoretical loyalities to Merton's contextualist approach. Having conducted war-related communication research, Merton had maintained professional ties with other pioneer communication researchers, even as his intellectual pursuits took him further afield (Delia, 1987). His *Social Theory and Social Structure* contained many illustrative examples drawn from mass communications while his *Mass Persuasion* (1946) was already widely regarded as a defining text of the field (Delia, 1987, p. 57; Wright, 1989b, p. 6). To the communication field, which was in the 1950s groping toward sociological explanations and macro-theories after decades of psychologically rooted research (Carey and Kreiling, 1974, p. 233; Delia, 1987, p. 35; Katz, 1964), the prospect of applying psychological evidence towards sociological claims would have made Mertonian functionalism — compared to Parson's strictly sociological variant — more appealing. Furthermore, Merton's modest contextualist scheme meshed not only with a broad American skepticism about grand theories, but also with the specific needs of communication scholars who, despite an empiricist bent, were in search of endogenous theories — and the respectability these would confirm on their emerging field. Together, these factors explain the triumph of Mertonian

over Parsonian functionalism in communication in particular, despite the latter's wider acclaim in social sciences.

Wright's formulation also drew upon an earlier tradition of functionalist research in communications that included: M. Willey's "The functions of the newspapers" (1942), identified six functions of the print news media: news, editorial, backgrounding, entertainment, advertising and "encyclopedic;" Lasswell's field-defining article, "The structure and function of communication in society," which codified the major functions of the media as surveillance, the correlation of parts of society in responding to the environment, and the transmission of the social heritage from one generation to the next; as well as a study co-authored by Merton and Paul Lazarsfeld, "Mass communication, popular taste and organized social action" (1948), which ascribed ethicizing and status-conferral functions to the mass media along with a narcotizing dysfunction.

In synthesizing this literature, Wright uncritically reproduced several of its weaknesses. In citing uncensored news as an example of potential disruptive media content (p. 102), for example, he followed Merton's judgmental operationalization of "dysfunction" (Carey and Kreiling, 1974; for Merton's similar treatment of anomie, see Hilbert, 1989) while ignoring his own acknowledgment that only standardized (i.e. patterned and repetitive) items were appropriate for functional analysis (p. 94). In keeping with the dominant scientistic orientation of communication studies of that era as well as the Parsonian concern with achieving "theoretical closure on the set of primary functions of a social system" (Parsons, 1977, pp. 111), the functions

identified in earlier studies — and accepted by Wright — were transsystemic and transhistorical. But functions like these, placed beyond the vagaries of culture and history, do not fulfill an important goal of functionalism, which is to explain the relationship of specific artifacts and institutions to each other within a given culture.

Filtered through the psychological research tradition of communications, functionalism would shift during the 1960s from society and media institutions as subjects of inquiry, as in the studies of Willey and others, toward the micro-functionalism that in the communications context came to be known as "uses and gratifications" research. This accommodation of individual cognition and intentionality, if joined to the holistic and social systemic concerns of the existing functionalist program, would have provided a much-needed humanistic, voluntaristic and micro-theoretical complement. But the study of individual functions abstracted from the normative order would dissolve society into a morass of free-willed and utilitarian media users unconnected to each other, to the symbolic content of the media transmitted material or to broader contexts beyond their media experiences (Carey & Kreiling, 1974; Elliott, 1974).

Fifteen years after his seminal article, Wright (1974) would catalogue the progress of functional analysis in mass communication and offer a few modifications to his earlier scheme. He noted that certain examples of functions provided in his first article (i. e., surveillance, entertainment, etc.) were not unique to mass communications and urged their reclassification as "activities" (i. e., routines) as distinct from "functions" (i. e., consequences of

particular routines). He also conceded that the fourth level of analysis in his previous article was rather "abstract" but offered neither a more concrete formulation nor replacement examples (p. 205). Wright sought similarly to distinguish functions more clearly from "uses." "Functions, as intended in the theoretical paradigm presented many years ago, referred to the *consequences* of certain routine, regular and standardized components of communications. As such, they were distinct from the intended effects, or purposes, of the communicator and from the intended use or motivations of the receiver" (p. 209). Having introduced this distinction, however, he went on to urge the combination of the functionalist and uses and gratifications approaches in interpersonal and mass communications research (p. 210). The tone of Wright's second article was both self-congratulatory and defensive. He noted with satisfaction that his preliminary statement had "not been superseded," but admitted that after fifteen years there remained intractable difficulties in the application of functional analysis to mass communications research (p. 197). This duality was doubly appropriate since Wright's formulation accounted for much of functionalism's success in the communication field as well as its weaknesses. In urging an abandonment of media institutions and the society as units of analysis while retaining the transsystemic and transhistorical functions identified in earlier studies, he had prescribed the very essentialist logic and conservative orientation for which the approach would come to be faulted.

Three Absences: Change, Causality and Culture

Of the criticisms directed at functionalism, three proved decisive in its undoing in communications: problems of logic, mainly tautology and an inappropriate appeal to teleological explanations; political conservatism, linked to an inadequate treatment of stratification and a tendency to ignore power; and a tendency to impose psychological and sociological analyses upon specifically cultural materials. These criticisms came from three distinct sources: Problems of logic tended to be highlighted by positivists who held causal explanations as the model for both the natural and social sciences (e.g., Hempel, 1959; Jarvie, 1965; Levy, 1988). Charges of political bias and inadequate treatment of stratification have been raised mainly by radical critics (e. g., Mills, 1959; Golding & Murdock, 1980; Hardt, 1979; Hall, 1982), used here to include conflict theorists and contemporary Mediterranean Marxists. That this point of difference came to be emphasized is not surprising since the two approaches fall at opposite ends of the change axis, but share a concern with holism and objectivism. The third criticism has been developed within communications mainly by humanists (e. g., Carey, 1978; Carey, 1989; Carey & Kreiling, 1974; Kreiling, 1978).

Of the critics charging functionalism with logical problems, probably the most influential was Hempel (1959) who cited a tautological use of concepts like adjustment and adaptation as well as a preference for teleological explanations. These criticisms of functionalist logic have recently been raised in communications, with reference to uses and gratification

studies in particular. Elliott (1974, pp. 253-254), for example, criticized the argument that use leads to the gratification of need as "at best circular and at worst imprisons research within a stable system of functional interdependence from which there is not escape." Carey and Kreiling (1974, p. 235) noted similarly that "in functional analysis the primary emphasis is not upon determining the antecedents or origins of behavior but upon determining the import or consequences of behavior for the maintenance of systems of thought, activity, or social groups." But while explicitly directed at functionalist studies in general (or at least all uses and gratification studies), charges of tautology and teleology apply mainly to nomothetic-systemic forms.

In explaining functionalism's alleged conservativism, most scholars tend to highlight three factors: the political uses made of the theory, especially as an antidote to Marxism (Hardt, 1979); an inherent theoretical bias, stemming from the focus on routinization, consensus and holism (Golding & Murdock, 1980; Hall, 1982; Hardt, 1979; Swingewood, 1984); and acceptance of the general framework of Western societies, especially the United States, as given and desirable (Golding & Murdock, 1980; Hardt, 1988; Mayhew, 1982). Formulated by C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, specifically in relations to Parson's grand theory, within communications this charge has come to be indiscriminately applied to all functionalism (e. g., Hall, 1982, p. 88; Rogers, 1983, p. 222). Without weighting the specific merits of this criticism, it is important to note that the charge does not apply with equal validity to contextualist and ideographic forms of functionalism (e. g.,

Malinowski, 1945) as it does to systemic and nomothetic variants — especially Parsons' emphasis on functions as coordinating adaptation to changes *in the environment* (Flanigan & Fogelman, 1965; Grimes, 1988; Rose, 1960; Sztompka, 1986).

From the cultural perspective, Carey and Kreiling — writing together and separately — have offered some of the sharpest, yet most sympathetic criticism of sociological functionalism. Writing separately, Kreiling (1978) specifically criticized the prevailing tendency among communication scholars to view cultural artifacts as "reflections" of firmer, more significant variables. "The issue of the meaning and appeal of the cultural materials is bypassed as the subject is translated into psychological and sociological categories" (p. 242). Drawing upon Durkheim and Gans, he proposed a perspective on culture that would "make the conventions the problematic of cultural studies and attempt to chart their appearance and transformation" (p. 253) and would "regard popular culture as consisting of bodies of cultural materials that express the styles and tastes of groups that create and uphold them, and we should think of the groups as cultural groups" (p. 249).

Together, Carey and Kreiling have urged communication scholars to "link the function of mass media consumption with the symbolic context of the mass-communicated materials or with the actual experience of consuming them" (1974, p. 232). To accomplish this, they have argued, uses and gratifications will have to undergo a triple conversion: adopt a cultural view of humans (in place of the current sociological or psychological models); accept the existence of multiple cultural realities (instead of the current

assumptions that one hard reality exist beyond culture); and a knowledge of the existence of culturally constructed "tastes" which do not conform to the current "means-end" model of human behavior along with specifying of the relevant context. Taken as a whole, cultural studies call for popular culture and other media artifacts to be studied for their "meaning and appeal" rather than as reflections of deeper psychological and sociological categories (Kreiling, 1978, p. 242). The radical reformation of the discipline implicit in this approach is encapsulated in the title of Carey's book *Communication as Culture*.

The culturalists' criticism, while valid in relation to systemic sociological functionalists, simply do not apply with equal validity to contextualists, like Merton, who have accommodated at the level of theory the existence of multiple systems or to Malinowski (1945, 1977), whose research focused explicitly upon the domain of culture. The "culture" concept is implicit in Durkheim's use of "social facts" as well as in Radcliffe-Brown's use of the "social life of a people as a whole." Functionalism, it is worth recalling, originated in anthropology in reference to culture, the problematic that then had no name. This origin and orientation has come to be obscured in communications, where the functionalists emphasis upon sociality has been interpreted largely in sociological terms while its cultural roots were all but ignored. Thus, the critique of functionalism by cultural studies advocates is merely a call for a return to the source, to the road not taken.

Faced with this barrage of criticism, however, functionalist assumptions and concepts disappeared as explicit concerns in

communications, only to reemerge under some unlikely banners. One surprising refuge has been "cultural studies," a major challenger during the 1980s to the "dominant paradigm" in general and functionalism in particular. Traveling under this name are such distinct approaches as the sociological analyses of Raymond Williams, rooted in the Marxist base-superstructure model; the structural analyses of popular cultural and hegemonic ideology undertaken by Stuart Hall and his colleagues at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham; and the pragmatic hermeneutics of James Carey and Albert Kreiling. Several fields of interest, now taken to be unique to cultural studies — including consensus maintenance (Williams, 1961; Williams, 1977; Hall, 1985; Hardt, 1988; Corcoran, 1988) and ethnomethodology and anthropology (Corcoran, 1988) — were earlier plowed by functionalists. In its search for linkages between the parts of a social system, cultural studies often reproduces the extreme holism for which systemic functionalism was rightly criticized (e. g., Splichal, 1988; Hardt, 1988; Corcoran, 1988; Curren, Gurevitch & Woollacott, 1982; Williams, 1961; Williams, 1977) while, in ignoring the structuring influence of the normative order, it follows uses and gratifications studies in a idealist celebration of audience sovereignty and consumer choice (Golding & Murdock, 1991). In a form of Montezuma's revenge, the works of Hall and colleagues recently have come under attack for conservatism (Milliband, 1985) and tautology (Newcomb, 1991).

"Cultural indicators" studies (CI), on the other hand, build upon the contextual-functionalist hypothesis of integration of systems, using

standardized instruments to measure individual symbolic elements, their linkages to each other as well as their geographic and temporal spread (Gerbner, 1969; Melischek, Rosengren & Steppers, 1984; Namenwirth & Weber, 1987). These studies have proceeded along three distinct lines: the impact of differential exposure to a symbol system on viewers' perceptions of the world, society and self, as undertaken by George Gerbner and his colleagues in the United States (e. g., Gerbner, 1969; Gross, 1984; Signorielli, 1984); long-term cultural changes and their relationship to economic and social developments, as explored by Karl E. Rosengren and his Swedish collaborators (e. g., Rosengren, 1983); and computer-based content analyses of political documents to uncover the dynamics of cultural systems, explored mainly by Z. J. Namenwirth and associates (e. g., Namenwirth & Weber, 1987).

CI researchers have developed research designs that overcome the extreme logical flaws identified by critics of the earlier tradition, incorporate concerns with stratification, and relate the genres and rituals they study first to each other and to the cultures of which they are a part, rather than to the social, political and economic realms of society. For example, Gerbner and colleagues have examined the differential distribution of power and discriminatory portrayal of gays, blacks, the elderly and women in television programs geared towards mass audiences (Gross, 1984; Signorielli, 1984). Another set of studies have charted the long-term dynamics of culture change by using the value dictionary developed by Lasswell, to trace the treatment of four fundamental functional problems — adaptation, goal attainment,

integration and latency — in a series of American, British and German political documents (Namenwirth & Weber, 1987). The latter studies are doubly influenced by Parsonian functionalism, through their use of the four basic functions and the value dictionary — both developed in that tradition. CI researchers also have restored attention to systems for the enforcement of norms as "the nexus between culture and praxis" (Andren, 1984: 63) which Mertonian functionalism had de-emphasized and uses and gratification scholars had all but ignored. This is implicit in the development of "mentions technique" (Rosengren, 1983), which measures the enforcement powers of literary critics, and more explicit in the approach to televised violence as "a dramatic cultural lesson, reflecting, demonstrating, and maintaining a hierarchy of social control and power relationships" in the studies of Gerbner and associates (Morgan, 1984, p. 365). In a reversal of the usual political polarities in communications, the thoroughly empirical CI researchers have come under fire for alleged left-wing do-good-ism (Tannenbaum, 1984). In addition, scholars in this tradition still show a greater penchant to relate cultural materials to sociological and economic categories (e. g., Namenwirth & Weber, 1987) than to the climates of tastes and feelings that would be expected to engage the attention of culturalist analyses (Carey & Kreiling , 1974; Kreiling, 1978). In brief, having lost the theoretical battles of the 1980s, functionalism has re-emerged in other guises for the 1990s.

Conclusion

Recent discussions of functionalism in communications have not often reflected the important differences within the tradition that have long been acknowledged in the broader social science literature, not least of all by functionalists themselves (Malinowski, 1939; Kuper, 1977, pp. 49-52; Parsons, 1977; Merton, 1957). Functionalists have shown a consistent tendency to bifurcate over three philosophical issues: the degree of systemness, outcome of functions and the level of synchronicity assumed to characterize social processes. In addition, there developed a generational-cum-geographic divide on the conceptualization of human nature. Although an assumption of determinism has served to distinguish Durkheimian holism, this emphasis came to be moderated with the transference of functionalism across the Atlantic due to an American propensity toward voluntarism as well as the intervening rise of Freudian psychology. At the point of functionalism's incorporation into communication studies, two strains existed: one nomothetic, systemic, stasis and structuralist and another generalist, dynamic and actionist. In drawing from the latter and its emphasize on individual agency, cognition and intentionality, communication scholars slighted the normative concerns of the former.

Although the number of scholars explicitly identifying their work as functionalist has declined drastically since the 1960s, several researchers influenced in varying degrees by functionalism have proceeded to investigate the functionalist hypothesis of integration of cultural systems while explicitly

incorporating concerns with stratification and multiple cultural systems into the design of their recent studies. While details remain to be developed, this reformulation marks a return to Durkheim's concern with uncovering the grammar of social and cultural relations embedded in patterned symbol manipulation and behavior. Secondly, it builds upon the "integrative" meaning of functional outcome rather than the "stabilizing" or "maintenance" connotation. Thirdly, it adopts a contextualist rather than systemic definition of system, with analysts being responsible for defining and justifying the selected context. Given its proven heuristic value (Jarvie, 1965, p. 31; Flanigan & Fogelman, 1965, p. 111), functionalism has earned a place in the evolving theoretical heterodoxy called communications. However, its future points, neither toward the Mertonian strain advanced by Wright nor the Parsonian alternative recently suggested by Rothenbuhler, but in the direction of a refashioned *cultural* variant that seeks to overcome the logical and political limitations of the tradition.

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Footnotes

1. These terms are used interchangeably in this paper with "functionalism" being used often simply because it is shorter.

2. As noted by Hempel, (1959, p. 303, n. 9), the coupling of intentionality and recognition yielded a third type of function, not acknowledged by Merton (e. g., those which are recognized though not intended).

3. In contrast to elementarism, which isolates constituent elements for examination, holism regards wholes to be greater than the sum of their parts and, consequently, parts must be understood in relation to the whole. Furthermore, holism holds that the parts should be studied as interrelated in the reproduction of the whole — not in isolation.

4. In epistemology, the main polarity among social scientists has been between positivism — the proposal that the objective of the social sciences is the construction of general laws similar to those found in the natural sciences — and anti-positivism.

5. Merton included a fifth connotation, "public gathering or festive occasion," drawn from popular speech, but that is irrelevant to this discussion.